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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 9 February 1995 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Croatia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to forward to you the appeal of the "Association of Croats from Northwestern Bosnia" on the appalling practices of ethnic cleansing and genocide perpetrated by Bosnian Serbs in the region of Banja Luka.

The horrifying tragedy and suffering of tens of thousands of expelled Croats from the northwestern part of Bosnia and Hercegovina demand a rapid and determined action of the international community and international organizations. I would like to urge you to engage all your efforts and prestige in order to prevent such practices of ethnic cleansing.

I would request that this letter and the enclosed appeal be circulated as an official document of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 12.

(Signed) Miomir Zužul
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

GENOCIDE AGAINST CROATS IN THE CITY OF BANJA LUKA

Of the 80,000 Croats who lived in northwestern Bosnia before the war, over 50,000 have been expelled by Serbian forces over the last three years. This includes 20,000 out of 30,000 Croats who lived in the city of Banja Luka. During this time the entire non-Serbian population has either been killed, expelled or mistreated. They have been subjected to terror and forced labour, often being taken to the confrontation lines to serve as human shields and being forced to fight against their own people (in violation of article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention).

During the last two months the situation has become even worse as exemplified by the events of the 5 December 1994 and of Christmas day, when Croat and Muslim civilians (approximately 300 persons) were taken away to serve in the Serbian forces. This was repeated on Sunday, 29 January 1995, when, after attending a religious service, some twenty Croat male civilians were taken from the town of Surkovac near Prijedor. The whereabouts of these men are still unknown. There have also been numerous incidents of severe physical and psychological abuse of innocent civilians. There has been an even greater number of acts of looting, robbery, and illegal confiscation of private property - that has occurred daily over the course of the last ten days.

We cite only some cases of sadistic treatment of elderly individuals which occurred in the last few days. I.A.K. from the village of Abrići, M. and R.D. from the village of Kozara, R.R. from Ivanjka, and M.S. from Dragočaj were subjected to severe physical abuse and their property was pillaged and destroyed. As a result, they are experiencing serious psychological trauma and are in need of medical treatment.

Serbian forces continue to enter Croatian-inhabited villages and engage in acts of physical and psychological abuse, pillage and robbery, while threatening the inhabitants in order to force them to leave their homes in the shortest time possible. The inhabitants are often forced to leave their homes without being allowed to take any belongings with them. The Serbian forces coerce them into signing papers which state that they have left "voluntarily" and charge them 200 to 500 German Marks for the "right to leave".

The mobilization of Croats between the ages of 18 and 65 has resumed. Among the mobilized are individuals who returned only recently from the battlefields in Glamoč and Bosansko Grahovo where they have been used as human shields by the Serbian forces. Because of this terror, the people are frightened and are worried for their lives. As a result they have begun to panic and leave in large numbers. Although the Serbian authorities are aware of this situation and receive daily appeals from the Bishop of Banja Luka Franjo Komarica, they have not undertaken any measures to protect the innocent non-Serbian civilians who have been left to the mercy of the Serbian bands.